Letter sent to speaker

Rabbani urges joint session of parliament

By Our Correspondent

ISLAMABAD, Dec 31: Deputy leader of the opposition in the Senate, Mian Raza Rabbani, has written a letter to the Speaker of the National Assembly for summoning of a joint sitting of the Parliament under Clause (2) of Article-70 of the Constitution of Pakistan read with Rule 125 of the Rules of Procedure and Conduct of Business in the National Assembly, 1992, and asked him to advise the government not to place a Motion under Rule 125 of the Rules of Procedure & Business in the National Assembly till such time as the chairman and the Senate are seized of the Privilege Motion.

In the letter the copy of which was released to the Press, the Senator narrating the facts and circumstances said (a) that on Sept 24, 1998 a statement of the minister for parliamentary affairs was published in a section of the press wherein he had stated that a Bill transmitted by the National Assembly and allegedly not passed by the Senate was to be placed in a Joint Session of Parliament. A privilege motion with reference to the said statement of the minister was filed on Oct 7, 1998 and is pending. (b) The bills stated herein under were duly passed by the National Assembly and transmitted to the Senate on various dates. The period of 90 days for consideration by the Senate, he said, has lapsed and the Bills have been transmitted back to the National Assembly with a message to that effect.

He said that these Bills are as follows: (1) Code of Criminal Procedure (Amendment) Bill, 1997. (2) Pakistan Baitul Mall (Amendment) Bill, 1997. (3) The Pakistan Navy Amendment Bill, 1998. (4) National University of Emerging Sciences Bill, 1998. (5) Pakistan Civil Aviation Authority (Amendment), Bill, 1998. (6) Ehtesab (Amendment) Bill, 1998. (7) The Karachi Port Trust (Amendment) Bill, 1998. (8) The Establishment of National Education Testing Service Bill, 1998.

In his letter, Senator Raza Rabbani pointed out that the aforesaid bills after transmission from the National Assembly and completion of requirements under Rule 108 of the Rules of Procedure and Conduct of Business in the Senate, 1988, were not placed on the order of the day by the government.

The senator said that the Privilege Motion pending consideration before the chairman and the Senate of Pakistan pertains to a gross breach of privilege and contempt of the Senate, hindering deliberately with malafide intent Senators from performance of their parliamentary functions and circumventing the legislative process as provided under the Constitution of Pakistan read with the Rules of Procedure and Conduct of Business in the Senate, 1998.

Mian Raza Rabbani said that the government with motive and mala fide intent which is evident from the statement of the Minister for Parliamentary Affairs dated Nov 24, 1998, failed in its duty under the Rules of Procedure and Conduct of Business in the Senate, 1988 read with the Rules of Business of the federal government to bring any of the said bills duly transmitted by the National Assembly on the order of the day during the required ninety days period.

Thus the Senate of Pakistan, Senator Raza Rabbani said, was denied its constitutional right to consider the said Bills. He said that this is not only a violation of the Constitution of Pakistan but also another attempt to deprive the federation which speaks through its representatives in the Senate from considering legislation which if passed by a joint sitting will be applicable to all federating units.